

ROBERT MENENDEZ
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3005

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Dr. Andrew C. von Eschenbach
Commissioner
United States Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20857

Dear Dr. von Eschenbach,

Concern about the chemical bisphenol A (BPA) in everyday plastics and its potential link to cancers and other health disorders is nothing new. The reports from the scientific community continue to be more and more disturbing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found BPA in 92 percent of Americans age 6 and older who were tested, and study after study on animals suggest that low-dose exposures, particularly on fetuses, may later lead to cancer or abnormalities in the reproductive organs. However, the biggest cause for concern came this week when a draft report by the National Toxicology Program raised the possibility of a link between the chemical and cancer, behavioral changes and early onset of puberty in girls, marking the first time that the federal government had acknowledged that possibility.

Many Americans are alarmed by this revelation and the thought that so many of the products we use every day could be raising our risk for cancer and causing hormonal and behavioral changes. Even the nation's largest retailer, Wal-Mart, has announced that it will be pulling all baby bottles containing BPA from its shelves, following the lead of other smaller retailers, like Whole Foods Market.

In a time of national concern and with the potential for a major public health issue looming, Americans expect your agency to give them information. Is it safe to continue using products in our homes that contain this chemical? Is it best to refrain until further research is conducted? Is the science on the matter conclusive? These are valid, immediate and important questions, but your agency has yet to give guidance to the general public on how to proceed. The purpose of the Food and Drug Administration is to protect the public health, but your near silence simply adds to the unease.

The FDA's previous, limited statements on BPA have been insufficient. I urge you to issue some sort of directive or public health notice so that the American people have a better understanding of BPA, the everyday products in their homes that contain it and how to best protect their families' health. I recognize that it may be premature to make a definite determination about the overall use of BPA in plastics, but it is never premature to explain to the American people how best to stay healthy. That is your agency's mission, and I expect you to fulfill it.

I thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator